

DESIGN
AUERBACH POLLOCK FRIEDLANDER
AUERBACH GLASOW FRENCH

Religious experience

Despite its 15,000 capacity, the theatre at Brigham Young University still offers its audience an intimate experience

View to stage from the first lighting catwalk (above); view from Digico console at house mix to stage and IMAG screens (below); slots in the gridiron floor allow architectural ceiling elements to be flown out and stored above rigging for events (far right)



Four years after the project began in 2006, the BYU-Idaho Center was completed, making Brigham Young University-Idaho home to one of the largest production theatres in North America. The new 15,000-seat venue recalls the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' 21,000-seat Conference Center in Salt Lake City (*Auditoria*, 2001), but does so in a setting appropriate to the church's expanding education system.

As part of the design team led by Salt Lake City-based FFKR Architects and DL Adams Associates acoustical consultants, Auerbach Pollock Friedlander, Performing Arts/Media Facilities Planning and Design provided programming, planning and full scope of theatre and audio-video consulting and design services for the new auditorium and broadcast centre, which includes live event support spaces, pre-/post-production HDTV facilities and a 186m² shooting studio.

The new state-of-the-art venue can seat the entire student body and community guests at regular weekly devotionals, as well as events featuring guest speakers, performing arts programming or commencement exercises. The auditorium's provisions for live broadcast and recording include a large central

control/mix position with two automated camera pylons, as well as balcony rail and side caliper camera locations and a flexible front cross aisle to accommodate rail-mounted camera dollies. Programming from the BYU-Idaho Center airs on the BYUtv network, available from many leading cable and satellite service providers worldwide.

"Our goal was to create a warm and inviting atmosphere for visitors to the BYU-Idaho facility," says Steve Pollock, principal in charge for Auerbach Pollock Friedlander. "The space has a surprisingly intimate quality and after a few moments, no matter where you are sitting, you're likely to forget you are attending an event with 14,999 other audience members. Seating, sightlines, audio reinforcement and massive image-magnification (IMAG) systems make seeing and hearing effortless for audiences."

The BYU-Idaho Center's auditorium has simple, clean finishes, a 'black-out ceiling' with exposed catwalks, a forestage grid and a gridiron with more than 60 motorised computer-controlled hoists from Scenic Technologies. It is a prime example of working theatre with technology and infrastructure representative of the latest cutting-edge systems.

With the hall's focus on amplified speech, compensation for long viewing distances and



visual references to scripture are accommodated by flanking 65m² rear-projection IMAG screens which present live camera feeds of the speaker, as well as pre-recorded imagery of text and pastoral scenes. Auerbach Glasow French – which also provided the architectural lighting design for the Salt Lake City Conference Center – applied certain lighting elements from that facility to the BYU-Center as well, recognising the importance of unifying the two with visual iconography and illumination appropriate for BYU’s important lecture functions.

Nearly half of the BYU-Idaho Center’s 700m² stage is comprised of variable height Stage Right platforms, providing greater flexibility in configuration. This arrangement

accommodates architectural, lighting and theatrical requirements for a variety of events, ranging from a basic production stage to an architectural surround with demountable orchestra shell walls, risers and ceilings elements – the stage set for devotionals.

“Meeting the requirements of such a large space with so many functions and broadcast requirements creates unusual demands that push technology and building codes to the limit,” says Pollock. “We experienced this at the Conference Center and at BYU. We are most comfortable addressing these functions in a leadership role and these kinds of challenges are a great match for our very best skill sets.” ■

www.auerbachconsultants.com

BYU-Idaho Center at Brigham Young University, Rexburg, Idaho



 AUERBACH · POLLOCK · FRIEDLANDER
Performing Arts/Media Facilities Planning and Design

 AUERBACH · GLASOW · FRENCH
Architectural Lighting Design and Consulting

SAN FRANCISCO

NEW YORK

MINNEAPOLIS

www.auerbachconsultants.com · info@auerbachconsultants.com